



The Circuit Rider

Princeton First United Methodist Church
316 S. Church Street ♦ Princeton, IL 61356
princetonfirstumc.org

Pastor Michael Ray Hickok

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♦ MAY 2026 ♦

A Word from Pastor Mike

Sunday, May 10 is Mother's Day. In worship that morning at First United Methodist Church of Princeton, we will give thanks to mothers and recognize them with the gift of a flower. Many of you are fortunate enough to have mothers who are still living. You continue to look to them as a source of love and wisdom. The bonds between mother and child change over the course of their lives and yet they endure. For some of you the roles are reversed, and you now serve as caregivers and providers for your mothers. God's grace empowers us to serve our family in this way.

Some of us are sustained by memories of our mothers who have passed away and now live eternally with the Lord. We look at photos or videos or simply recall their faces and the sound of their voices in our minds. We remember family celebrations where our mothers orchestrated gatherings that were filled with food, conversation and laughter. We recall one-on-one chats with mom that made a lasting impact on our lives. My own mother died in 2007. She was a deeply committed Christian who wanted her four children and six grandchildren to navigate their own walk of faith. She played a part in this by faithfully and fervently praying for all of us. My mother and I had many serious discussions about the Bible and Christianity. My heart is full of gratitude for those conversations.

As I have observed the mothers of infants, children and teens over the years I have been amazed. Motherhood requires so much faith, love, strength, energy, patience and endurance. The role of mother seems to be continually expanding. I trust that we will always look for new ways to support and encourage the mothers in our midst.

*May God in Christ bless you richly,
Pastor Michael Ray Hickok*

May Worship Schedule

Sunday Worship

Sundays 9:00

Saturday Evening Service

May 2nd 5:30*

May 16th 5:30

Holy Communion

May 2nd 5:30*

May 3rd 9:00

From the Office

Please coordinate with the office on any events or repairs going on at the church, so we don't have two things happening in one room. Thank you!

May at a Glance

May 3 - 6:00 Youth Group Meets
May 4 - 5:30 Adult Ministries
May 12 - 1:30 Care Team Meeting
 4:00 Staff Parish Committee
May 13 - 10:00 Witness Team Meeting
May 14 - 6:30 Finance Committee Meeting
May 18 - 6:30 Trustees Board Meeting

Holy Communion

The sacrament of Holy Communion will be served on the first weekend of May - **Saturday the 2nd** and **Sunday the 3rd**. If you prefer to take communion at home with the live broadcast, you are welcome to pick up a communion pack from the office during the week before.



Our Table

Our Table will meet twice in May to provide a meal and fellowship to anyone who would like to attend. Everyone is invited to come on Mondays, **May 11th and 18th from 5:00 – 6:00 pm.**



May Change the World

Change the World for May will be donated to **Midwest Mission Distribution** Center, near Springfield, IL. This warehouse is a collection point for many types of goods and it produces a range of kits (i.e. health/hygiene, cleaning/disaster, birthing, personal dignity, and layette kits) for distribution throughout the United States and the world. They also repair treadle sewing machines and bicycles, and build school desks for those in need. Please consider donating your change into the jar outside the Sanctuary, as we “change the world” with each and every coin!

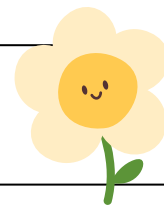
Change the World April Report

In April, we raised \$372.49 for Bishop’s Appeal. The 2026 Bishop’s Appeal is for Education for Central Conferences, supporting two key initiatives: a high school in Tanzania led by NIC missionary Christina Kim, and broader theological education efforts identified by the Council of Bishops. Thank you so much for your generosity!

A Few Notes To Remember

- **Church Office Closed :** The office will be closed Monday, May 25 for Memorial Day
 - **Updates and Events:** Be sure to like and follow the PFUMC Facebook page to be updated on events happening in our Church. Also download our very own PFUMC Church App from the App Store or Google Play Store
 - **Donation Shopping Cart Reminder:** We are always accepting food items for Tri-County Food Pantry. Items most needed are: Hamburger Helper, peanut butter, canned fruit in syrup, canned chicken, white or brown rice, canned ravioli, and any kind of snacks.
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SUNDAY SCHOOL



CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

Children's Sunday School was so much fun this month! Our faith focus was "Jesus gives us new life" and we read stories from the Bible about the empty tomb, the Emmaus encounter, and breakfast on the beach. The children enjoyed playing a thinking game, tic-tac-toe with crosses, and Jenga. We also painted butterflies to remind us that Jesus gives us new life.



May 17th will be our last Children's Sunday School for this school year. The nursery will be available for all children 6 and under. Children 7 and older are encouraged to stay with their families and enjoy the church service.

Amanda Noord, Children's Sunday School Director



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL SAVE THE DATE

Make sure to save the date for this year's Vacation Bible School which will be **July 6th through July 9th** from 6-8pm. More details to come later this month.

YOUTH GROUP

May Youth Group will meet on Sunday May 3 and May 17th. All youth grades 6-12 are welcome, friends are welcome as well!



United
Women
in Faith

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

The United Women in Faith will be having their spring salad luncheon on **Saturday, June 13th at 11:00 am in Cushing Hall**. There will be special music presented by a couple of PHS chorus members under the direction of Brandon Crawford.

The UWF would like to invite the women of the church to join them for this luncheon. Pat Eddy and Sharon Smith are hostesses for the day but, we ask that everyone would please bring a salad to pass. There will be a sign up sheet for the salad you plan on bringing in the Narthex some time around the middle of May. By signing up we hope to eliminate too many duplicates of salads. Beverages and table service will be provided.

ECUMENICAL WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Every Monday Morning, the **Ecumenical Women's Bible Study meets at 10:00 am in the Conference Room** at the Church. This is the room next to the Choir Room. The cold and snow of winter challenged our schedule. On May 4 we will finish the DVD series "Embraced by God" with Babbie Mason.

Starting May 11, we will start a new study titled, "God of Creation". In this study we will be studying Genesis 1-11. We will look at the creation story, the fall, redemption, and restoration. We will dig deeper into some familiar stories...Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and more. All women are invited to attend regardless of Church affiliation. This is a "drop-in" group which means that you come when you can. You are not required to be there each week.

Questions about this study or our group can be directed to Janet Becker at beckerjnj71@gmail.com.



GRADUATE RECOGNITION

We will be recognizing our 8th grade, high school, college, trade school and advanced degree graduates in the near future. But we need to know who they are! Please let the church office know if you have a graduate in the family. Once we find out the graduates, we'll contact them to determine the best date to recognize them on Sunday and celebrate and share their future plans. (*See info sheet at the end of the newsletter.*)



RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS CHALLENGE

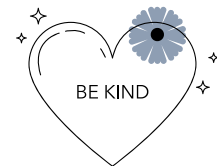
The month of May is full of all sorts of exciting things...Prom, Graduation, Mother's Day, Good Neighbor Day and Pentecost to name a few.

The Witness Team is unofficially declaring the Month of May as **Love Your Neighbor Month**. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. It is often referred to as the birthday of the church. We too have been empowered by the Holy Spirit and as such we are called to witness to one another...to show the Love of God to someone.

To this end we are putting out a challenge to do RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS during the month of May. This could be in the form of sending a card, visiting someone in the hospital or nursing home or at home, taking a meal to someone, picking up sticks for a neighbor, giving someone a ride, calling a Mother who may be alone on Mother's Day... the possibilities are endless. When you come to church you will notice a string of flames in the sanctuary and a stack of Post-It Notes. **Please take a Post-It Note, write on it your Random Act of Kindness and place it on one of the flames.** You may sign the note or leave it totally anonymous.

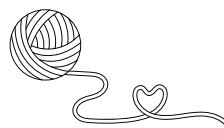
We would encourage you to do multiple acts of kindness. It will be exciting to see how many flames we can cover with notes.

The Witness Team



Book Discussion Group

Please join the church book club on **May 12** to discuss "Four Winds" by Kristin Hannah. We will meet at **10:00 am** in the library.



Knitter's Group

Calling All Knitters and Crocheters! All skill levels are invited to come knit, crochet, loom or just chat on **Tuesdays at 2:30 pm** in the conference room.



Princeton Board Games Group

This group meets on **Fridays at 6:00 pm** in Cushing Hall. Everyone interested in learning more about modern board gaming and any player level is welcome to join this friendly group.

A PROMISE TO MOM: REFLECTIONS OF AN ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSION MEMBER

BY JEANY GEWIN, MEMBER OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSION FROM PRAIRIE SOUTH DISTRICT

The following has been edited for length from an April Post on [umcnic.org](https://www.umcnic.org). To read and view the full article, please visit <https://www.umcnic.org/news/a-promise-to-mom-reflections-of-an-annual-conference-session-member>



REV. FABIOLA GRANDON MAYER AND JEANY GEWIN (RIGHT)

Sometime in the 1970s, when I was a young wife and teacher, my mother and I were talking on the phone. She was quite upset about an experience she had as a member of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference session. She and Pastor Joseph Buckles had just returned from the Conference, disappointed about the time spent on language in The United Methodist Book of Discipline that reinforces the restrictions and exclusions of people from membership or ministries based on gender, gender identity, ability, and other identifiers.

I remember her saying, "If Jesus welcomed all to the table, so should we. The conference had much more important work to do!" Her voice broke on those words. I tried to reassure her, but my mother held a firm belief that wrong had been done and good people had not stopped it. I had no idea the time for change would not come until 2025, 24 years after her death in 2001, and that I would have the opportunity to be a small part of the change.

Last year at Annual Conference, Bishop Dan Schwerin encouraged me to write about my experience at conference and its connection to my mother's service as a member. I fulfilled my posthumous promise to my mother, Mrs. David (Edna) Chase. As her obituary said, she was a homemaker and substitute teacher. She and my father lived in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. She was an active member of the Olympia Fields United Methodist Church, where she served as a member of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and as a Stephen minister, lay leader, Sunday school superintendent, and president of United Methodist Women. She was delighted to serve as a member of 30 years of Annual Conferences.

Opening doors

God opened the door for me to make a contribution at the conference level. I knew she would have wanted me to have some part in opening doors that had been shut years earlier, and I desperately wanted to be part of the solution. I did begin to read more thoughtfully and pray with more focus as soon as information about the upcoming session appeared on the conference web site.

In 2025, I realized God was once again opening a door. Understanding my health was failing and meeting the challenge of preparing as a full district representative for many more years might be too much, I felt grateful this was to be the year when we would vote on amendments to the United Methodist Church's constitution.

Regionalization: This amendment organized the United Methodist Church into geographic bodies. It put all conferences on an equal footing and enable them to pass rules relevant to their own contexts.

Inclusion in membership: This amendment added "gender" and "ability" to the list of characteristics that do not bar people from membership in a United Methodist congregation.

Racial justice: The complete revision of the constitution's Paragraph 5, Article V strengthened the denomination's longtime support for racial justice.

A PROMISE TO MOM: REFLECTIONS OF AN ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSION MEMBER (CONTINUED)

Solemnly, asking Jesus to give me physical and spiritual strength, I promised him and my mother, who seemed right in the room with me, that I would do my part at conference. I studied the issues and wording, and I reluctantly accepted the fact that I would not know the results of ratification of the constitutional amendments for several weeks.

I thanked the Lord that I would be present to listen, speak, and vote for change in the language in the Discipline. I prayed for courage and the right words. And I wore my mother's engagement ring around my neck. I knew mine would be a small, almost invisible part, but I also knew many small parts make a difference. And those many small parts were far more than I realized that day.

In her article "[Young Voices Matter](#)," Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer wrote about churches and donors who reached out in love to care for immigrants in desperate need. The significance of her words is that these immigrants are part of us, no longer "others," but welcome even in times of danger.

"Scripture reminds us to stand with the marginalized, to bear one another's burdens, and to embody God's justice and compassion," she wrote. "This was an opportunity to live out that calling in tangible and faithful ways. More than financial assistance, this appeal was a visible expression of solidarity. It declared that our immigrant siblings in Christ are not alone. Together, we are choosing to be a community of hope, courage, and resilience."

Such beautiful words, words that reflect the openness we have affirmed in our Discipline.

At Annual Conference in June we will observe the Year of Hope. For me, it will be a year of hoping the change in the Discipline will continue the change in the our connectional church, hoping our hearts will really be open to all, that we will see the image of God in the souls of every person, a discipline I am working on myself right this minute.

In the introduction to the 2026 theme, the article "[Gathering in Hope Together](#)" quotes Bishop Dan Schwerin as saying, "Grounded in Romans 5:3-5, this year's theme encourages us to remember that endurance builds character, and character builds hope, pouring love to us through the Holy Spirit. Guided by this spirit, participants will engage in opportunities to practice hope, build stronger bonds, and discern God's call in their lives."

To my mother

Now we enter the year of hope, and I will attend Annual Conference as a volunteer, helping the voting members check in and greeting them, both clergy and laity, some of whom have become friends and members of my extended faith community. I will sing one more time in the mass choir. John and I will be there to hear Bishop Schwerin preach and to see the commissioning of Kelly McKune, whose call began in our church. The next day I'll work in the morning, and we will attend the memorial service where I will remember so many pastors who have touched my life and hear the Rev. Dr. Brian Gilbert preach.

Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer has said, "As we gather this year, my prayer is that we rediscover hope not as an idea, but as a discipline."

May it be so, Mom; may it be so.

In Jesus name, Amen.



FROM THE GREEN TEAM

What do I do with Old Electronics?

By Molly Glick April 3 2024
From one5c.com March 19 2026



The following are direct quotes edited for length. To read the full article please visit [one5c](https://one5c.com).

There is a right way to get rid of old computers, phones, cables, and more! E-Waste rose by 82% between 2010 and 2022, reaching nearly 70 million tons. That is enough to fill tractor trailers bumper to bumper around the planet. United Nations E-Waste Global Monitor.

The impacts of e-waste:

E-waste can release substances into the air, water, and soil, impacting people, plants, and wildlife. This is why landfills don't allow electronics to go into the regular household trash stream. In many developing countries local people break apart recyclables using unsafe techniques which expose them to harmful chemicals. "Increasing the lifespan of electronics by 50% to 100% can mitigate the total greenhouse gas emission associated with mining, manufacturing and transportation of these products" Circular Economy.

Prepare electronics before passing them on. Back up and sign out of your programs. Remove storage. Activate factory reset. Assess how well the device is working. Donate or sell. There are a number of organizations that take electronics to refurbish and donate to the less fortunate. It is also possible to privately sell electronics.

Recycle. Call2Recycle maintains a list of companies that have 'take back' policies. Earth911 has a list of reputable recycling companies near you. Watch for local e-recycling events.

Special instructions. If donating a cell phone by mail, you must use special packaging due to the lithium battery. "Computers with Causes" takes computers and laptops for specific needy populations. Cords can be donated to schools or universities. Unplug household electronics and let sit for several days before donating to Resales. Printer cartridges can be dropped off at some stores or mailed back to the manufacturer.



Messages of Thanks

Thank you to everyone who was able to come to my birthday party, and to those who wished me a Happy Birthday. - *Julie McCutchan*

Diana Piper (Scott Piper's wife, and Jerry & Jan Piper's daughter-in-law) passed away on January 3, 2026. Upon her wishes, she didn't want a memorial service. Her burial will be private at a later date. We thank you for your calls, cards, and prayers. - *Scott Piper Family*

Thank you to the FUMC Care Team for their cards and phone calls. We appreciate it very much. Please continue to keep Jerry and his family caregivers in your prayers.- God Bless, *Jan Piper and Family*

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT MARCH 2026

	Month	Year to Date	Percent of Budget	Percent of Year
Income	\$25,282	\$88,723	28	25%
Expenses	\$30,542	\$85,497	22	25%
Net income	(\$5,260)	\$3,226		

At the end of the first quarter revenues have exceeded outlays by \$3,226. Expenses are running under budget and Revenues above budget. With the shortfall budget approved by Council in February, this will need to continue throughout the year. Thanks all for your tithing in the first quarter of the year.

WORSHIP VIDEOS ONLINE

The Sunday worship videos are always available on PFUMC's youtube.com channel. Open the YouTube app on your device, or type www.youtube.com into your internet browser. Then search for 'Princeton IL First United Methodist Church'. When you see one of our videos show up on your screen, click on it. If that's not the one you want to view, simply click on where it says 'First United Methodist Church' under the video that's playing. Then you'll be able to see the whole selection of videos you can choose.

Worship Videos are live Sundays on the church's Facebook page.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FINANCIAL PERSEVERANCE

On behalf of the PFUMC Finance Committee, we would like to say a big 'thank you' to all the people who have continued to contribute financially to the ministries of our church. Below are some of the ways in which you can give to the church.

1. Via mail – 316 S. Church Street, Princeton.
2. In the locked white mailbox by the main glass doors of the building.
3. Via your bank's on-line bill pay program. A physical check is then mailed to the church.
4. An automatic withdrawal (EFT/ACH) taken from your checking, savings or investment account. This can be done through your bank, or at our bank. **Contact Shelly Grabill for the bank information (i.e. routing number and acct. number).**
5. Through PayPal. Just visit our website (princetonfirstumc.org) and click on the 'giving' button. Then follow the instructions. You can set it up for a one-time use, or on-going. See Shelly if you have difficulties.

We continue to do ministry because of God's grace and your support.



PRAYER CORNER

Remember in your prayers...Family of Rich Mair, Family of Chuck Hultine (Fred Kimberley's friend), Family of Nick Ioder (Marg Wendle's brother), Family of Russ Frye (Jeany Gewin's cousin), Family of Keith Cain, Sandee Halberg (health issues), Family of Jim Metz (Sue Ray's father), Karen Prinz-Cunanan (John & Donna Prinz's daughter – health issues), Robert (Alan Bergh's friend – health issues), Shane Hultine (Chuck & Lori Hultine's son – health issues), Harry Owens (Sue Moss' brother – cancer), Pam Cochran (Jeany Gewin's friend – health issues), Marcia Hudson (broken hip), Heidi Anderson (Lynne Rausch's daughter in-law – cancer), Mark (Pat James' son in law – cancer), John Sayers (cancer treatments), Bob Parker (health issues), storm victims in our nation, those with cancer, or illness in our congregation, those awaiting tests/results, those recovering from surgery & treatments, the lonely, the homeless, refugees, immigrants, military personnel, health care workers, law enforcement, fire and emergency personnel.

****IF YOUR LOVED ONE IS IN THE HOSPITAL OR AT A NURSING HOME, PLEASE LET THE CHURCH KNOW WHERE THEY ARE AND THEIR STATUS. MOST HOSPITALS/NURSING HOMES DON'T LET THE CHURCH KNOW WHEN YOUR LOVED ONE IS ADMITTED.**



Altar Flowers

If you're interested in providing flowers for the altar, let the church office know. Flowers are a beautiful part of God's creation, and people love seeing them in the Chancel area. You can order them from a florist, or pick them from your garden. Share the beauty with others as we worship God!



Treats for Social Hour

Volunteers are needed! The church provides the coffee, lemonade and water, but we rely on your baking skills/donations for the treats. Please consider signing up on the sheet outside the office, if you can provide treats of your choice. Thank you!



Donation Cart

If you have items to donate to Tri-County Food Pantry, please feel free to bring them in and drop them in the shopping cart located in Cushing Hall. The need is great, and all gifts are appreciated.

REMEMBERING PFUMC IN YOUR WILL

We never like to think about the time when we won't be here, but it comes for all of us. Thankfully, we know the next phase of our life is a joyful one – being reunited with loved ones and with God. But we will all leave behind both the 'stuff' of this life and a legacy. What better way to combine both than by including your church in your will. Hopefully you have wonderful people to leave gifts to as well, but if you include PFUMC in your will, you'll be ensuring important ministry will continue long into the future because of your generosity. See a member of the Endowment Committee if you have questions.



DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS GRADUATING?

The church would like to know of any graduates in the congregation. If you have a family member, or know of someone who will be graduating from Junior High, High School, College, Technical School, Trade School or Military Academy, please let us know so that they can be recognized in the June Circuit Rider newsletter.

*(*Only graduates from our church family will be recognized on Graduate Sunday, but the names of all graduates will appear in the June newsletter).* Please complete the form below and return to the church office by dropping it in the offering plate, in the white mailbox, mailing it, or e-mailing it (office@princetonfirstumc.org) by **May 15**.

Name of Graduate(s):

Name of Parents:

Name of Junior High, High School, College, Trade/Technical School or Military Academy:

Graduate's Future Plans (if known):

MAY Celebrations

Birthdays

5 Joan Smith
8 Greg Faber
12 Kathryn Moell
13 Paul Kautz
Linda Hickok
14 Phillip Goodale
15 Kristie Cass





16 Aaron Ray
Niklas Schneider
Jordan VandeVenter
17 Abby Davis
22 James Bystry
Barb Skean
23 Karen Kuebel

25 Jenny Carlson
Kenn Corban
28 Tonya Gewin
30 Carl Clemmons
Lee Wahlgren
31 Rachel Denton
Trent Goodale
Kathy Jessen
Jan Powelson

Anniversaries

5 Kenn and Lora Corban
Joe and LouAnn Birkey
7 Paul and Carol Byrd
9 James and Tami Zwacki
10 Gerald and Rhonda Leadley
15 David and Susan Moss

May 2026 at First United Methodist Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3 9am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> with Holy Communion Children's Sunday School 10:00 Youth Sunday School 10:00 Righteous Renegades 10:00 The Middles 6:00 Youth Group Women's Emmaus	May Change the World: Midwest Mission Distribution Center 4 10 - Women's Bible Study 5:30 Adult Ministries	2:30 Prayer Shawl Group	6	8	1 Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	2 5:30 Saturday Evening Worship with Holy Communion
10 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> Children's Sunday School 10:00 Youth Sunday School 10:00 Righteous Renegades 10:00 The Middles Mother's Day	11 10 - Women's Bible Study 5 pm Our Table Meal 	12 10:00 Book Discussion Group 1:30 Care Team 2:30 Prayer Shawl Group 4:00 Staff Parish	13 10:00 Witness Team	15 Graduate Submissions Due Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group 6:30 Finance Committee	16 5:30 Saturday Evening Worship 	23
17 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> Children's Sunday School 10:00 Youth Sunday School 10:00 Righteous Renegades 10:00 The Middles 6:00 Youth Group	18 10 - Women's Bible Study 5 pm Our Table Meal  6:30 Trustees Meeting	19 2:30 Prayer Shawl Group	20	22 Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	29 Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	30
24 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> 10:00 The Middles 10:00 Righteous Renegades 10:00 Youth Sunday School	25 (no women's Bible Study) Office Closed 	26 2:30 Prayer Shawl Group	27	28	29 Church Office Closed 6:00 Board Games Group	30
31 9 am Worship <i>in-person or live-stream</i> 10:00 The Middles 10:00 Righteous Renegades 10:00 Youth Sunday School						



The First United Methodist Church of Princeton, Illinois

Sunday Worship 9:00 a.m.
Saturday Worship (1st & 3rd Saturdays) 5:30 p.m.

Michael Ray Hickok	Pastor
Fallon Bush	Treasurer
Josh Bush	A/V Technology Director
Charles Gebeck	Organist
Shelly Grabill	Office Manager & Financial Secretary
Amanda Noord	Children's Sunday School Leader
Shelley Orwig	Youth Sunday School Leader
Tom Newby	Lay Leader
Elizabeth Schlender	Communications Director
Chris Rucinski	Nursery

Church Office	(815) 872-2821
Church General E-mail	office@princetonfirstumc.org
Church Website	princetonfirstumc.org

The First United Methodist Church of Princeton
316 South Church Street
Princeton, IL 61356

POSTMASTER:
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



May 2026 Circuit Rider